

Major Power Struggle Is Reported Among Nicaragua Rebel Leaders

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Special to The New York Times

SAN SALVADOR, Jan. 22 — A major internal power struggle is again splitting the Nicaraguan guerrilla movement, threatening the rebels' political leadership at a time when they are trying to stage a new offensive, according to several American and rebel officials.

The infighting appears to be a continuation of a long-simmering conflict that has pitted one faction headed by Arturo José Cruz against another, stronger faction led by Adolfo Calero.

There are strong rumors among key rebel and American officials that rebel personnel changes may be in the offing, with the outcome as to which of the two men will come out on top still in doubt.

An American official said that the infighting was "vicious" and that Mr. Calero and his followers were "trying to get Cruz."

"But they may be surprised to find which direction the final changes fall in," the official added, refusing to elaborate.

Move From Office Reported

Neither Mr. Cruz nor Mr. Calero could be reached for comment today, but a rebel spokesman in Miami said Mr. Cruz had removed his personal effects from his office in the rebel headquarters there. The spokesman and other officials denied that Mr. Cruz had resigned, but they acknowledged that there were "problems" that had yet to be resolved.

Mr. Cruz and Mr. Calero, along with Alfonso Robelo, are the three top leaders of the American-backed United Nicaraguan Opposition organization, which is being financed by \$100 million in renewed American aid.

Mr. Cruz's followers said in interviews last week that internal rebel changes that the Administration has promised to Congress had been obstructed. They said they were tired of being railroaded by Mr. Calero, by the Central Intelligence Agency and by the general secretary of the rebel umbrella group, Leonardo Somarriba.

"We're supposed to be allies, but the fact is that Calero and his people treat us like enemies and have done everything they can to undercut us, threaten us and see to it that the United Nicara-

guan Opposition does not replace the old F.D.N. as the main rebel organization," one rebel official said.

The F.D.N. stands in Spanish for the Nicaraguan Democratic Force, the rebel army headed by Mr. Calero that was formed by the C.I.A. in Honduras five years ago. The United Nicaraguan Opposition was ostensibly formed under American pressure to create a broader rebel movement and subsume the F.D.N.

Both rebel and American officials said the internal rebel power struggle had pitted the State Department against elements of the C.I.A., with the agency generally backing Mr. Calero.

But if Mr. Cruz and his followers either resign or denounce the workings of the rebel front, it could cause serious political problems for the Reagan Administration, which must certify to Congress that efforts to broaden and liberalize the rebel movement have been successful.

Seen as Broadening Appeal

Mr. Cruz, one of the more liberal leader among Nicaraguan exiles, has been seen as an essential figure in the move to widen the rebels' appeal and to help erase their image as a puppet army led by exiled army officers who served under the former dictatorship and were paid by the C.I.A.

The rebels' internal conflict began when Mr. Cruz and Mr. Robelo were imposed on Mr. Calero in the American-backed effort to form the United Nicaraguan Opposition. Since then, several rebel officials said, Mr. Calero and Mr. Somarriba have outmaneuvered Mr. Cruz and officials loyal to him in the rebel directorate.

Such tensions go to the root of Nicaragua's civil war. Mr. Cruz and Mr. Robelo are former senior Sandinista officials who say they are fighting to recover a necessary revolution that they contend was stolen by Marxists.

Mr. Somarriba is a former Esso manager, and Mr. Calero is the former head of Coca-Cola in Nicaragua. They were never supporters of major social change in Nicaragua and appear to have a more conservative and more powerful following among Nicaraguan exiles than Mr. Cruz or Mr. Robelo.